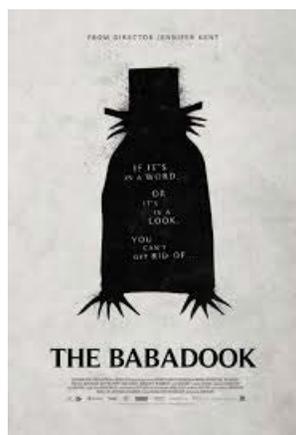


THE BABADOOK

By Lorraine Viade, PsyD.



The Babadook (rhymes with look) is an Australian film that would have you believe it is a horror film, but it isn't. It is a film about a horrible thing. It is an intense psychological drama about the horrors that live inside us and what happens when we let them into our lives. It is a cautionary tale that every parent should see. The film deals with the troubled relationship between a young boy and his widowed mother who live together in a house filled with memories, and whose combined behaviors have isolated them into a world of frightening images. As we observe the day-to-day lives of mother and son, we see a boy who is terrified of something he cannot control or understand. He only wants to protect his mother from it. His mother works in a depressing setting and gets little sleep at night. All of this takes a toll on both of them. That is what *The Babadook* is about.

In the midst of all the underlying metaphor is a drama that culminates in one of the most graphic images of unconditional love that any film could ever offer. To be able to confront an emotion, to look at it and not let it control you is a true act of courage. The relationship that is tested in this film shows how very important it is to hold on to our own love no matter what. Children are much better at it than adults. It is what allows them to forgive parents so quickly of almost anything. All too often, parents are too attached to their own delusions to see what is right in front of them or what might be inside of them. Some children can see things as they really are. They can hold steady in the midst of the storm and come out the other side stronger than before. They abide, survive and recover. Resilience is a miraculous force to be reckoned with.

The Babadook embodies everything we fear. It is something that lives in the shadows waiting for an invitation. Often, it will sneak in when we aren't looking, or when we are tired and alone with our own thoughts. *The Babadook* is always there, feeding on our fears. It can tear families apart and makes people do things that they don't want to do. It is the most insidious monster of all. *The Babadook* is all around us. We can see it in the newspapers and on television. We can hear it on the radio. It lives in the families where children are hurt badly. Don't let it live with you. Guard yourself against it and when you see it, attack with all of your might. That is the lesson learned here. Stand up to *The*

Babadook wherever you see it. Don't let it in where you live. *The Babadook* has some tips for what to do when it does get in.

I really appreciated the psychodynamics of this film. It thoughtfully gave us the opportunity to objectively take a peek into places in the psyche that we tend to avoid, deny or repress. *The Babadook* is an unpleasant reminder that those defenses are useless in the long run. *The Babadook* ultimately is a love story wrapped in terror. It is bound to disturb parents who have been challenged with difficult circumstances or unusual children. What it teaches us is a lesson everyone needs to know. I'll let you go and figure out what that is on your own.

I give *The Babadook* five doors. It is currently playing at the Laemmle Theater in Pasadena.

